

Message Text

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ACTION OES-05

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7707

C O N F I D E N T I A L C A N B E R R A 1 9 7 2

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MAR, AS
SUBJECT: SOLAR OBSERVATORY NETWORK

REF: STATE 236127

1. SUMMARY: R.A. PEACHEY, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DFA'S DEFENCE DIVISION CALLED EMBOFF IN ON MARCH 11 TO DISCUSS SOON. PEACHEY SAID GOA WAS ANXIOUS TO DISCUSS TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT WITH US EXPERTS AND SUGGESTED THAT USAF EXPERTS VISIT AUSTRALIA IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO INITIATE SUCH DISCUSSIONS. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT USAF TEAM BE SENT TO CANBERRA IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO INITIATE TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS ON SOON. END SUMMARY.

2. PEACHEY THEN GAVE EMBOFF AN AIDE MEMOIRE REPEATED BELOW WHICH GIVES OFFICIAL GOA VIEWS ON SOON. PEACHEY NOTED THAT THE PROJECT HAD NOT YET BEEN DISCUSSED WITH MINISTERS. TEXT OF GOA AIDE MEMOIRE FOLLOWS:

3. QTE. UNITED STATES SOLAR OBSERVATORY VIEWS OF OFFICIALS AT THIS STAGE TAKING INTO ACCOUNT INFORMATION SO FAR RECEIVED FROM THE UNITED STATES, WERE THAT:

1. IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE FOR THE FACILITY TO BE CONTROLLED AND OPERATED BY CIVILIANS;

2. THERE SHOULD BE MAXIMUM AUSTRALIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE CONTROL AND OPERATION OF THE FACILITY;

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3. THE PURPOSE OF THE FACILITY SHOULD BE MADE PUBLIC;
 4. ACCESS TO THE FACILITY AND ITS DATA SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO AUSTRALIAN AND INTERNATIONAL SCIENTISTS AND SCIENTIFIC ORGANIZATIONS;
 5. ANY AGREEMENT SHOULD BE FOR AN INITIAL PERIOD OF 10 YEARS;
 6. THE FACILITY SHOULD NOT BE LOCATED AT AN EXISTING DEFENCE FACILITY, INCLUDING NORTH WEST CAPE. END QTE.
4. EMBOFF ASKED PEACHEY WHY GOA WAS UNWILLING TO LOCATE SOON AT NORTHWEST CAPE. PEACHEY SAID AUSTRALIAN DOD FELT THAT LOCATING AN UNCLASSIFIED PROJECT WITHIN THE NORTHWEST CAPE COMPLEX COULD AROUSE RENEWED CRITICISM OF NORTHWEST CAPE FACILITY ITSELF. EMBOFF SAID THE OBVIOUS SOLUTION WOULD THEN BE TO LOCATE SOON NEAR NORTHWEST CAPE BUT NOT WITHIN ITS BOUNDARIES. S.S. HARDING, PEACHEY'S ASSISTANT, THEN SAID THAT THE AUSTRALIAN DOD DID NOT WANT SOON ANYWHERE NEAR NORTHWEST CAPE BECAUSE OF FEARS OF PUBLIC CRITICISM. ONE LIKELY RECOMMENDATION WOULD BE TO LOCATE SOON NEAR ALICE SPRINGS. EMBOFF POINTED OUT THAT THIS SEEMED STRANGE. IF GOA WAS CONCERNED ABOUT LOCATING SOON NEAR NORTHWEST CAPE BECAUSE IT COULD AROUSE RENEWED CRITICISM OF THE NORTHWEST CAPE FACILITY THE SAME ARGUMENT WOULD OBVIOUSLY APPLY TO THE EXISTING FACILITIES NEAR ALICE SPRINGS IF SOON WERE TO BE LOCATED THERE. PEACHEY AGREED THAT EMBOFF HAD A POINT.

5. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THAT THE USG SHOULD CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR LOCATING SOON NEAR NORTHWEST CAPE. THE AUSTRALIAN DOD IS SENSITIVE-TOO SENSITIVE IN OUR VIEW - ABOUT POSSIBLE CRITICISM OF NORTHWEST CAPE, AND THE LOCATION OF SOON IN THAT AREA WILL NOT IN OUR VIEW CAUSE ANY MORE CRITICISM OF NORTHWEST CAPE THAN WE COULD NORMALLY EXPECT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

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